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TAGS: [AMGT](#) [APER](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: SURGE STAFFING I: PRT STAFFING

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

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Summary

(C) 1. Despite the efforts of all involved, we did not meet the September 30, 2007 deadline to staff all 133 specialist positions for Provincial Reconstructions Teams (PRT) in Phase II. The result was a deficit of seven USAID specialists, seven Department of State (DOS) 3161 hires, and eight other DOS positions that were diverted from Phase II to newly established ePRTs. One DOD surge position will be filled in October. The Office of Provincial Affairs (OPA) has taken the lead in addressing the issues that caused the missed deadline for Phase II by establishing clear guidance that demands accountability in every step of the hiring and staffing process; centralizing our tracking and evaluation efforts; and updating the manning document twice daily. All partners in the staffing process will keep OPA informed as soon as decisions are made or personnel actions occur that effect our personnel numbers. With the proper coordination among stakeholders and sound internal controls, we will complete all required staffing for both Phase II and Phase III, by December 30, 2007.

What didn't work and what has been done to correct it

(C) 2. Candidates for Phase II specialist positions were qualified professionals who responded to ads on USAJOBS.GOV and USAID's ads via Research Triangle Institute. Their applications were screened in Washington, sent to OPA and USAID in Baghdad, and then transmitted by email to the team leaders. Several problems have been identified. In a number of instances, PRT leaders failed to select candidates in a timely manner or did not respond. To remedy this, in late August 2007 OPA management established a timeline that required the team leaders to respond within 48 hours. Unfortunately, personnel in the Surge office did not strictly enforce compliance of the timeline. The 48 hour selection timeline is critical to the integrity of staffing efforts and new OPA policy requires that if a decision is not made within 48 hours by the team leader, it will be made by the OPA Director. In other instances, resumes were not passed from OPA to the team leaders expeditiously. When OPA receives a selection package it is now sent to the team leader on the same business day that it is received in order to avoid any of the bottlenecks that we experienced in the past.

(C) 3. The dynamic on-ground situation has also impacted the

staffing effort. Practically all PRT team leaders and deputy team leaders turned over during the recruiting process and perceptions of what skills were needed often changed drastically. This led to revised position descriptions and requirements, in some cases candidates being rejected, which necessitated the search for new candidates against the revised requirements. In a number of cases, particularly for DOD personnel in the early stages of the surge, the candidates were assigned to teams without benefit of resume review or prior approval of the team leader. As noted, team leaders now see resumes and are able to approve the selection. In addition USAID is providing the PRTs two candidates rank ordered for their consideration and review rather than one as was previously the practice. Team leaders are now required to review their staffing complements to determine if changes are needed in skill sets or if the position descriptions require specific adjustments to meet a changing assessment of operational needs.

(C) 4. As noted above, team leaders rejected a significant number of candidates and OPA failed to deal with this issue until late August. Further, resumes returned from the field were sitting at OPA and the candidates were not reassigned to teams where their skill sets could be utilized. The current policy requires that if a team leader refuses to take one of the offered candidates, an action memo will go forward to the Ambassador for approval to keep the assignment or place the candidate with another team. Under no circumstances will a position not be filled or diverted without the express permission of the Ambassador.

(C) 5. There were several cases of candidates being rejected by team leaders due to a lack of suitable life support to accommodate additional staff. For example, there were instances where the PRT advised that it neither had vehicles to transport any additional team members nor staff to provide interpretation and translation services; others lacked billeting for new team members. Unfortunately, the team leaders were not raising these concerns with OPA in a formal manner, nor were alternatives explored. We now require all team leaders who have unfilled positions to complete a life-support survey monthly to assure that housing, office space and logistical support are available when needed.

(C) 6. In several cases hiring was delayed after the team leaders/OPA selected a candidate because of the extended processing time in Washington. DOS 3161 candidates now have five work days to accept an offer and submit the necessary documentation.

(C) 7. Furthermore, various offices in Iraq and Washington were keeping their own tallies of surge staffing that were often inconsistent and resulted in confusion. To address this problem, OPA now has a single transparent manning instrument that is maintained by one person, with a back-up, and accounts for the status of each position in each phase as well as the staffing of the new ePRTs.

(C) 8. Additionally, USAID recruitment was slowed down because of the inability to obtain CAC cards. This is still a problem that has not yet been resolved in Washington. CAC-card-related problems resulted in delays in getting advisors deployed from the United States. Some advisors have voluntarily agreed to come to Iraq on MNF-I badges instead of the CAC card they should travel on, which means they are held up in Baghdad while their applications for MNF-I badges are processed. MNF-I card privileges are also less extensive than those provided by CAC cards which can complicate the work of the advisors.

Our Successes

(C) 9. OPA met the September 30, 2007 deadline to identify the core members of the new ePRTs. All positions are filled with personnel now in Iraq except for three USAID officers who will arrive at post by October 20, 2007. We used eight

Phase II positions for the new ePRTs that will require backfills and it is expected that we will use some Phase III positions and personnel, which will need backfills, to fill out the remaining non-core positions on the teams established post-surge.

(C) 10. USAID now has five of twelve Phase II individuals against positions on the ground and has identified advisors for the other seven. The PRTs have accepted six of the seven proposed advisors and one advisor is still being considered by the PRT. OPA is engaging on the seventh advisor with the PRT. It will take 15 - 45 days for advisors to get on the ground from the date the advisor is accepted by the PRT.

(C) 11. USAID now has nine of twenty-six Phase III positions on the ground and has identified candidates for eight other positions, seven of which have been accepted by the PRTs. USAID's contractor has a solid pipeline of candidates for the other nine positions and will fill them and have them on the ground by the end of Phase III.

(C) 12. OPA is taking action to ensure that we do not have a shortfall with Phase III which closes on December 31, 2007. The requirement of this final phase is to add 111 positions to the 37 of Phase I and the 133 of Phase II for a total of 281 specialists entering the PRT program since the President announced the Surge on January 10, 2007. 18 specialists for Phase III have arrived in Iraq and we anticipate the other 93 to be here by December 31, 2007.

(C) 13. Comment: During the past week the staffing process has been addressed by the inter-agency community. We believe the procedures we and Washington are now putting in place will eliminate the problems and establish accountability. End comment.

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